

## Promising Practice: PHOCASHELPS.COM Web Application

### Workforce Investment Board SDA-83

### Professional Healthcare Opportunities—Careers and Support (PHOCAS)

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Serving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and low-income individuals in northeast Louisiana, Professional Healthcare Opportunities—Careers and Support (PHOCAS) is a Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) program, funded by the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Family Assistance.

One way PHOCAS uses technology to serve a geographically large, rural area is through PHOCASHELPS.COM (<http://www.phocashelps.com>), a Web-based student success application that facilitates communication and collaboration for students, coaches, instructors, tutors, counselors, and administrators. Launched in August 2012, the application features a private, secure social network, smartphone applications, tutoring services, and video conferencing for online meetups.

PHOCASHELPS.COM has all the features of a social networking site. Users access the application with a username and password, create a profile, and upload a picture. Users can share documents, chat in blogs, add friends, send messages to other members, and read news on the Wall. The site's calendar lists test dates, tutoring sessions, and study group meetings. Students can enter online, face-to-face meetup rooms any time they want to study or just talk. This social interaction helps the application function as a peer support community of learning.

One of the primary purposes of PHOCASHELPS.COM is to connect students with flexible tutoring services specialized for the health sciences. PHOCAS has developed online tutorial videos for basic skills training and prerequisite courses which cover dozens of topics in math and science, and all videos are hosted on the application for viewing anywhere there is an Internet connection. The application is used for Web-based, face-to-face tutoring sessions for specific courses and topics with students who are sometimes an hour's drive away from the tutor. Students go on the application to request the tutoring session. The tutor and student enter the online video meetup room for the tutoring session, where the tutor can present documents, use the digital whiteboard, and use desktop-share during the session. The tutor can record the session and post it as a video for other students to review. Students can also use the site to request the tutor visit their school for in-person sessions.

Instructors use the PHOCASHELPS.COM site to support program courses through a method called flipped learning ("flipped" because instead of classroom lectures and homework exercises, this method more or less makes the lectures the homework and uses the classroom for practice). With flipped learning, students review the lecture, flash cards based on the lecture, and required readings prior to the actual class. Teachers and tutors develop these presentations and upload them in PowerPoint and video formats. Then the instructor messages students to notify them of the posting and due date. Students can then watch the video or PowerPoint on a computer or smartphone as often and whenever they wish. Embedded quizzes

give instructors feedback so they know which problem areas to focus on in class. In the classroom, students then try to apply the knowledge by solving problems and doing practical work. The role of the classroom teacher is then to tutor students when they become stuck, rather than to impart the initial lesson. This method allows classes to be used for more hands-on time with the instructor guiding the students.

With more than 352 members, the application is very popular with PHOCAS students, and it is helping them succeed in their courses as well as pass the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX).